

SO LONG

ON VIEW

April 19, 2023 – June 1, 2023
Wednesday four – eight p.m., Sundays two – six p.m.
and by appointment

Nicole Gravier

In the wake of the 1968 student protests, Nicole Gravier moved to Milan and began to make art. Over the course of the following decade, she would come to produce a seminal body of work. In the series shown here, she deconstructs the press and media of the time, dislodging patriarchal narratives and undermining capitalist modes. As she mimics the tools used by an industry designed to subdue the masses with entertainment, Gravier lays bare those conceits we are usually all too tired to notice. She builds a language that is uniquely hers, setting her apart from artists like Cindy Sherman, who worked comparably and contemporaneously in the United States (Sherman's 1976 "Bus Riders" postdates Gravier's "Cartes Postales"). If her eye is analytical and discerning, her voice is distinctly playful and poetic, and in this contradiction, she reconstructs a world we can all sympathize with and find comfort in.

In Myths et Clichés/Fotoromanzi (1976-1980) and Cartes Postales/Postcards (1973), Gravier places herself both in front of and behind the camera (she is the protagonist in the images that you see), creating scenes that are at once particular and generic. She is there to receive the promises of a burgeoning capitalist world, the stories of a rapidly expanding, tirelessly broadcast America, the nuclear family, money, and fame—resolution in surrendering. Gravier becomes fascinated by the cosmic magnetism of social promises, or pressures: of Love, Beauty, Success, Culture, and Happiness ("the clichés" as she calls them). And then, she defies them. She does so, simply, by embracing them and then being bold enough to elaborate on them.

Every myth she momentarily inhabits is complicated by elements that might, at first glance, seem out of place. These tonal and stylistic disruptions—a book with Marilyn Monroe on its cover reads "the making of a woman," a copy of the fotoromanzo Noidue sits next to a Red Brigade pamphlet—reveal a more intricate reality, one which might at first appear dark, but is profoundly hopeful and sincere. In her works, she still yearns for love, beauty, success, culture, and happiness, but these mantras are no longer capitalised, nor are they capitalised upon. They are now vague desires, their helter-skelter chaos eroding the rigid outlines of capitalism's myths. "So long, Nicole" she signs off her emails, a callback to the glamorous farewells of the fotoromanzo, before she invites us back to an anxiety-inducing but nonetheless more human world.

WORKS

CARTES POSTALES, 1973

In this series, Gravier recreates postcards featuring landmarks and works of art. She has inserted herself (and sometimes her friend Daniele) into these scenes disrupting their once languid existence.

Note from Nicole:

Daniele was one of my friends who accompanied me in my work on the Cartes Postales in Paris, always posing with me at the Louvre. The black and white photographs of me and Danielle in front of the Ingres paintings were occasionally taken, at my request, by the museum visitors themselves, who also had themselves been photographed in front of the paintings. These photos were often poorly framed, blurry, with the painting cropped, and not always perfect.

TÉLÉFILMS POLICIERS, 1974

Detective TV series centers on the American detective television series that aired in Italy and France in the 70s (Mannix, Cannon, Suspence, Ironside, etc.). The black and white triptychs feature direct snapshots of close-ups that aired on TV.

Note from Nicole:

These various television police series regularly aired in the early afternoon in the 70s ...In front of the television, I took photos knowing more or less when the cliché close-up would arrive. Mundane objects, a doorknob, a glass, a telephone, a watch, cut to disturbing ones, syringes or guns or items related to the crime, banknotes or jewelry. Color and design would offer information in code. For example, the office phone would be different from the phone in an apartment, the hotel or the hospital. Thus, an object would identify the place of action and reinforce a sense of danger.

MYTHS ET CLICHÉS, 1976-1980

Myths et Clichés/Fotoromanzi/Fine/Publicità (1976-1980) are tight and loose recreations of scenes from popular foto-romanzi of that time; photostories whose speech bubbles Gravier has stripped and repurposed in her images featuring herself as the heroine, her personal items as props.

Note from Nicole:

The subcategory of the endings, images marked 'FINE', are themselves sorted into even more subcategories, different "happy endings." False notions of love and happiness are linked to harmony with nature: a couple embracing under an arch of flowers. Linked to protection: the sun and stars that guide them. To refuge: the home where they find refuge and live in isolation, for "lovers are alone in the world." To well-being and money, an elevation of social status for the woman: she travels adorned with jewelry and furs, because love is an illusory escape (as in a dream) and travel ends in marriage, an unchangeable and unchanged final point of photostories. The end...I hope it's okay...

CLOCKWISE

CARTES POSTALES,
1972-1973

LE PONT DE VAN GOGH,
TABLEAU /Van Gogh's Bridge,
painting, c-print, 45x30 cm

LE PONT DE VAN GOGH
À ARLES /Van Gogh's Bridge
in Arles, c-print, 45x30 cm

PLACE DE LA CONCORDE,
Place de la Concorde in Paris,
c-print, 45x30 cm

MIREILLE AUX SAINT-
MARIES-DE-LA-MER/Mireille
at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer,
c-print, 45x30 cm

NICOLE POSE AVEC
DANIELLE / INGRES-
LA GRANDE ODALISQUE
Nicole Gravier poses with
Danielle in front of La Grande
Odalisque by Ingres, c-print,
45x30 cm

NICOLE POSE AVEC
DANIELLE / INGRES-
BAIN TURC/Nicole
poses with Danielle in front
of The Turkish Bath by Ingres,
c-print, 45x30 cm

ARLÉSIENNE ET GUARDIAN
Arlésienne and the Guardian
(after Marc Allégret's 1942 film
L'Arlésienne), c-print, 45x30 cm

EN CAMARGUE / LA CROIX DE
GUARDIANS / Cross of Camargue
c-print, 30x45 cm

TELEFILM POLICIERS,
1974

S: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

J: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

T: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

A: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

U: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

B: N°1 - N°2 - N°3
Series: Gros Plans
c-print B/W
60x30 cm

MYTHS ET CLICHÉS, 1976-1980

DELIA COMINCIA A CONOSCERE
LA SOLITUDINE, *Lambda print*,
30x45 cm [It dawns on Delia, the loneli-
ness of an evening spent reading or watch-
ing TV.]

DIM, *Lambda print*, 30x45

PHILIPS, *Lambda print*,
30x45 cm

PRIMA O POI TI RITROVERO,
Lambda print, 30x45 cm [Through the
broken glass, Bobby's picture keeps on smil-
ing at Elaine. (One way or another, I'll find
you again.)]

...DA UNA SIGARETTA ALL' ALTRA
Lambda print, 30x45 cm [He began shift-
ing nervously, restlessly, from one armchair
to another... from one cigarette to anothe-
r...]

LE LORO LABBRA SI UNISCONO
Lambda print, 30x45 cm [Their lips meet
in unison; a glowing kiss, no joy more
intense.]

PERFETTO RESORRO TI ASPETOO
PER L'ORA DI PRANZO, *Lambda*
print, 30x45 cm [He has forgotten his wife
who is waiting for him for lunch, a daily
ritual he'll never get used to...
It's noon already? Forgive me, Claudia.
When I work I lose track of time... I'll be
home in half an hour.
Perfect, darling... I'll wait for you to start
lunch.]

NE VUOI LA PROVA? GUARDA...
Lambda print, 30x45 cm [You want proof?
Just look. Oh...]

NON SARO MAI PIU FELICE...
Lambda print, 30x45 cm [She is crying,
filled with a great sadness and hopeless-
ness. (Never again will I be happy. Never
again, and that's for the rest of my life.)]

QUANDO SI SVEGLIERA TROVERA
IL MIO MESSAGGIO, *lambda print*
30X45 cm {Dawn has arrived. On the
horizon, the sky is still full of stars...
When you wake up, you will find my
note...]

CHANEL
Lambda print
30X45 cm

BIO

Nicole Gravier (born 1949, Arles, France) lives and works in Arles. She was professor of Artistic Anatomy at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bergamo, Naples and Florence and at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan until the end of 2017. Forthcoming shows include: Myths et Clichés at École Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie, Arles, 2023; and Pictures and After at Mamco Museum, Geneva, 2023. Selected solo and group exhibitions include: Kolé Séré at Braunsfelder, Cologne, 2022; Fotoromanza at Le Commun, Genève, 2021; Nicole Gravier and Nora Turato, Words Are Way Too Easy To Play With at Ordet, Milan, 2020; SuperSalon at Paris Internationale, 2020; It's Ugent! at Luma, Arles, 2020; The unexpected subject: 1978 Art and Feminism in Italy at FM Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Bonaspetti, 2019; Mythes & Clichés, Photoromans at Hermes-Ermes, Vienna, 2019; Nicole Gravier at Contemporary Art Museum, Zengzhou, 2013; Typish Frau at Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, 1982; Mannerism: A theory of culture at Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, 1982; Venice Biennale, Section Special projects, Venice, 1980; Mythes & Clichés at Galleria Monti, Sperone, Rome, 1975; Photographers Painters at Salon of Contemporary Art/Flash Art, Paris, 1975; Cartes Postales at Ecole St Ursule, Dijon, 1973; Sequences/PhotoKina at ARC2, Cologne, 1973; Grands et Jeunes d'Aujourd'hui/ Cartes postalise at Grand Palais, Paris, 1973; Contemporanea at Villa Borghese, Rome, 1973; 70 Peintres at E.N.S.E.E.I.H.T, Toulouse, 1972; and Impact II at Musée d'Art Moderne de Céret, 1972.

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